

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CEBU 00021 01 OF 02 130531Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 /066 W
-----130554Z 049062 /12

R 130249Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL CEBU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 282
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CEBU 21

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, RP
SUBJECT: BELEAGURED CHURCH IN DAVAO

REF: (A) 76 CEBU 86; (B) MANILA 3258

SUMMARY: PRELIMINARY HEARING FOR 208 CHURCH ACTIVISTS ACCUSED OF COMMUNIST CONNECTIONS IN DAVAO AREA WAS HELD IN EARLY FEBRUARY. DEFENSE LAWYERS NOW PREPARING COUNTER-AFFIDAVITS, BUT IT IS UNCLEAR WHEN OR WHETHER HEARING WILL RESUME. SIMILAR HEARING HELD IN MALAYBALAY, BUKIDNON, MARCH 26. TWO AMERICAN PRIESTS ARE ACCUSED IN EACH OF THE HEARINGS. SOURCE OF CHARGES APPEARS TO BE CONTROVERSIAL PANAMIN AGENCY, WHICH WIELDS CONSIDERABLE POWER IN NON-MUSLIM AREAS OF MINDANAO. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSUL VISITED DAVAO CITY MARCH 30-APRIL 1 AND OBTAINED FURTHER BACKGROUND ON PRELIMINARY HEARING AGAINST 208 CATHOLIC SOCIAL ACTIVISTS ACCUSED OF COMMUNIST NPA CONNECTIONS IN DAVAO NORTE AND DAVAO ORIENTAL PROVINCES AND DAVAO CITY.

2. THE "PELOTA COURT" HEARING. AS REPORTED REF A, 69 CHURCH-RELATED PEOPLE WERE DETAINED LAST NOVEMBER. A FEW WERE KEPT IN DETENTION UNTIL THE FEBRUARY 8-11 HEARING, BUT MOST WERE FURLOUGHED AFTER A FEW DAYS OR WEEKS. ON THE DAY BEFORE HEARINGS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CEBU 00021 01 OF 02 130531Z

BEGAN, PC ROUNDED UP MOST OF 208 ACCUSED AND SERVED SUBPOENAS ON MOST OTHERS. THE TWO ACCUSED AMERICAN PRIESTS (REF B) AND SOME OTHERS WERE NOT NOTIFIED AT ALL. FOUR BISHOPS AND OTHER AMERICAN MISSIONARIES INCLUDED IN ORIGINAL ARREST LIST OF 156 (WHICH WAS CIRCULATED AT BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN JANUARY --SEE MANILA 1662) WERE NOT INCLUDED IN FEBRUARY LIST.

3. GOP IMPORTED "NPA BEAUTY QUEEN" NELIA SANCHE AND "RED PRIEST" FR. EDICIO DE LA TORRE FROM MANILA TO STAND WITH LOCAL ACCUSED, ALTHOUGH NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE STARS AND THE DAVAO ACCUSED HAS BEEN ALLEGED. DAVAO CHURCH PEOPLE SPECULATE THAT THEY WERE BROUGHT IN ONLY FOR THEIR HEADLINE VALUE. HOWEVER, THE MOTHER OF FR. DE LA TORRE CAME TO DAVAO FOR THE HEARINGS AND WAS MAINSPRING IN GENERATING MASS SYMPATHETIC ATTENDANCE AT THE HEARINGS, WHICH IN TURN INSPIRED LOCAL LAWYERS TO UNDERTAKE DEFENSE OF ACCUSED.

4. DAVAO LAWYERS TOLD CONSUL THAT IN SIMILAR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS A PUBLIC HEARING IS NOT REQUIRED AT THAT POINT IN CASE. NORMALLY ACCUSED AND DEFENSE LAWYERS ARE GIVEN COPIES OF AFFIDAVITS CONTAINING CHARGES, WHICH THEY HAVE TEN DAYS TO REBUT WITH COUNTER-AFFIDAVITS. FIRST AND ONLY PRELIMINARY HEARING IS NORMALLY HELD AFTER COUNTER-AFFIDAVITS HAVE BEEN FILED, PRIMARILY TO CLARIFY CONFLICTING STATEMENTS. INVOLVED DAVAO RESIDENTS SPECULATE THAT FEB 8-11 HEARING WAS HELD PRIMARILY AS PUBLIC REBUTTAL TO WORLD PRESS TREATMENT OF BISHOP'S CONFERENCE PASTORAL LETTER.

5. PRELIMINARY HEARING TOOK PLACE IN PC BARRACKS' PELOTA COURT AND RAPIDLY TOOK ON CIRCUS ATMOSPHERE. SYMPATHETIC CROWD NUMBERING OVER A THOUSAND OBVIOUSLY RATTLED THE MILITARY PROSECUTORS BY CHEERING SARCASTICALLY EVERY TIME NEW CHURCH-NPA CONNECTION WAS READ OUT.

6. MILITARY LAWYERS WERE UNPREPARED AND HAD ONLY SINGLE COPY OF VOLUMINOUS SET OF AFFIDAVITS. DEFENSE LAWYERS AGREED TO FOREGO NORMAL FULL SET OF AFFIDAVITS FOR EACH DEFENDANT (WHICH PROSECUTION PLEADED WOULD COST TOO MUCH TO REPRODUCE) AND ACCEPTED ONE SET FOR CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CEBU 00021 01 OF 02 130531Z

EACH OF THE SIX LAWYERS. THE VOLUNTEER LAWYERS ARE DEFENDING CLIENTS INDIVIDUALLY AND ARE NOT WORKING AS A COORDINATED TEAM. BISHOP REGAN OF TAGUM (AMCIT) HAS RECENTLY OFFERED RETAINERS TO THE LAWYERS. COPIES OF THE AFFIDAVITS WERE FINALLY DISTRIBUTED TO THE LAWYERS THREE WEEKS AFTER THE HEARING, AND THE LAWYERS HAVE REQUESTED 30 DAYS TO FILE COUNTER-AFFIDAVITS. THEY NOTE THAT AT LEAST 30 DEFENDANTS ARE NOT EVEN MENTIONED IN THE AFFIDAVITS.

7. NO ONE KNOWS WHEN--OR WHETHER--THE SECOND STAGE OF THE PRELIMINARY HEARINGS WILL BEGIN. SOME SPECULATE THAT THE GOP HAS PROVED ITS POINT FOR THE MOMENT AND WILL HOLD FURTHER ACTION UNTIL IT FEELS NEED TO HIT ACTIVIST CHURCH AGAIN. SOME FEEL GOP NEEDS CHURCH SUPPORT (OR AT LEAST ACQUISCENCE) IN CURRENT CRISIS IN MUSLIM AREA, AND ALSO IS FULLY OCCUPIED WITH THAT SITUATION, AND THUS WILL WAIT UNTIL THAT CRISIS IS OVER BEFORE MOVING AGAINST CHURCH. OTHERS EXPECT GOP TO MOVE AGAIN AS SOON AS PROSECUTION CASE IS READY.

8. ALL DEFENDANTS ARE NOW OUT OF DETENTION EXCEPT ONE, (FNU) ESCANO, WHO HAS BEEN HELD SINCE NOVEMBER. LOCAL SOURCES ARE

BEWILDERED AS TO WHY HE HAS BEEN SINGLED OUT. ACCORDING TO ONE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CEBU 00021 02 OF 02 130538Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 /066 W
-----130554Z 049123 /12

R 130249Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL CEBU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 284
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CEBU 21

REPORT, THE DAVAO CITY PC COMMANDER WROTE A STRONG LETTER TO MANILA RECOMMENDING HIS RELEASE A MONTH AGO, BUT TO DATE NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN. ONE DEFENDANT, A STUDENT AT THE JESUIT ATENEO DE DAVAO, REPORTEDLY DIED IN CUSTODY. OTHERWISE, CHURCH SOURCES REPORT NO VIOLENCE OR PHYSICAL MISTREATMENT OF THE DE-TAINEES, ALTHOUGH THEY SAY THE EMOTIONAL STRAIN WAS TREMENDOUS. THEY EXPRESS PRIDE THAT FEW IF ANY AGREED TO TURN STATE'S EVIDENCE UNDER THE PRESSURE.

9. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT IN BUKIDNON PROVINCE, THREE JESUIT PREISTS (INCLUDING TWO AMCITS: FRs. CALVIN POULIN AND JOSEPH STOFFEL) AND ONE NUN RECEIVED SUBPOENAS FOR A HEARING MARCH 26 IN MALAYBALAY ON CHARGES OF INCITING TO SEDITION. MALAYBALAY'S BISHOP CLAVER HAD REFUSED TO SEND THEM TO NEARBY CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY FOR HEARINGS. CLAVER TOLD CHURCH SOURCES IN DAVAO MARCH 30 THAT ABOUT 200 SUPPORTERS MARCHED WITH THE DEFENDANTS TO PROVINCIAL PC HEADQUARTERS FOR THE BRIEF HEARING. THE MILITARY INVESTIGATORS WERE BETTER PREPARED, WITH COPIES OF THE AFFIDAVITS FOR THE DEFENDANTS. THEY REPORTEDLY HAVE TEN DAYS TO PREPARE THEIR REBUTTALS. THE PC JAG OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE HEARINGS, COL. HAMILTON B. DIMAYA, IS ALSO PRESIDING IN DAVAO.

10. PANAMIN, THE EMINENCE GRISE. MOST OF DAVAO ARRESTS LAST NOVEMBER WERE MADE BY THE PC COMMANDER OF DAVAO ORIENTAL, WHOM
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CEBU 00021 02 OF 02 130538Z

CHURCH PEOPLE REGARD AS MENTALLY UNBALANCED AND WHO WAS IN ANY EVENT RELIEVED OF HIS COMMAND IN DECEMBER. HOWEVER, ALL OF THE AFFIDAVITS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN PREPARED BY PANAMIN (OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT FOR NATIONAL MINORITIES), AND MOST OF THE DEFENDANTS HAVE HAD SOME CONTACT WITH PANAMIN. PANAMIN MAY SIMPLY BE JEALOUS OF CHURCH SUCCESS WITH NON-CHRISTIAN TRIBES IN NORTH-EASTERN AND EASTERN DAVAO. PANAMIN HAS ESTABLISHED AT LEAST FOUR FIELD OFFICES NEAR CHURCH MISSIONS IN TRIBAL AREAS THERE, SIMILAR TO THE SANTA CRUZ MISSION IN SOUTH COTABATO (76 MANILA A-268), AND HAS HAD A SIMILAR LACK OF SUCCESS IN "COMPETITION" WITH THE CHURCH MISSIONS.

11. HOWEVER, ONE SENIOR CHURCH ACTIVIST TOLD CONSUL HE SAW A PANAMIN DOCUMENT WHICH DESCRIBES ITS PURPOSE AS TO "SECURE THE TRIBAL AREAS. HE BELIEVES PANAMIN HAS QUASI-POLICE FUNCTIONS IN TRIBAL AREAS (HENCE ITS PREFERENCE FOR CREATING ARMED CIVILIAN HOME DEFENSE FORCE UNITS). OTHER REPORTS INDICATE THE PC IS UNHAPPY WITH PANAMIN'S "SECURITY" ACTIVITIES IN THE HINTERLANDS. SIX MONTHS AGO THE PC RAIDED THE HOME OF PANAMIN'S REGIONAL DIRECTOR IN DAVAO AND CONFISCATED WEAPONS THERE. THE PC IS ALSO REPORTEDLY ANGRY AND EMBARRASSED THAT IT FOLLOWED PANAMIN ADVICE ON THE NOVEMBER ARRESTS AND NOW MUST TAKE THE PUBLIC HEAT.

12. PANAMIN HAS GONE OUT OF ITS WAY TO PERSUADE CHURCH WORKERS TO DEFECT TO ITS SIDE AND PROVIDE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE CHURCH AND PARTICULARLY THE "WHITE PRIESTS", I.E., MARYKNOLL FATHERS, IN THE AREA. PANAMIN REPORTEDLY OFFERS "VACATIONS" IN GOOD HOTELS IN MANILA TO SUSCEPTIBLE CHURCH WORKERS DURING WHICH THEY ARE PERSUADED TO WORK AGAINST THE CHURCH. OFTEN, ACCORDING TO ONE AMICIT PRIEST, THEY USE LIES AND EVEN FORCED TO ENCOURAGE CHURCH WORKERS TO ACCEPT THESE VACATIONS. THE CENTRAL GOP WITNESS IN THESE CASES, LILIA JUDILLA, WAS A CHURCH WORKER WHO NOW WORKS FOR PANAMIN. CHURCH PEOPLE IN DAVAO REMEMBER HER AS AN IDEALISTIC YOUNG THING WHO GOT INTO THE WRONG COMPANY AND IS NOW IN OVER HER HEAD.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CEBU 00021 02 OF 02 130538Z

13. CHURCH ACTIVISTS PROFILE THE 208 DEFENDANTS AS PRIMARILY INVOLVED IN "CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY" WORK IN THE BARRIOS. BECAUSE OF A SHORTAGE OF ORDAINED PRIESTS (ONE PER 40,000 IN THE DAVAO PROVINCES), LAY RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED TO ADMINISTER BARRIO CHAPELS AND CONDUCT PRAYER SESSIONS. THESE COMMUNITY LEADERS ALSO ADMINISTER THE BUSINESS OF THE PARISH, LEAVING THE PRIESTS FREE FOR MORE SPECIALIZED SERVICES. BECAUSE THESE "CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES" PARALLEL THE BARRIO AND MUNICIPAL STRUCTURE AND BECAUSE THEY FUNCTION DEMOCRATICALLY, CHURCH SOURCES FEEL LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS SEE THEM AS COMPETITION AND WANT

THEM REMOVED.

ELLSON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MOSLEMS, TRIALS, RELIGIOUS GROUPS, MINDANAO, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CEBU00021
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770127-0690
Format: TEL
From: CEBU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770463/aaaacche.tel
Line Count: 226
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 196335a6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 CEBU 86, 77 MANILA 3258
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2824785
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELEAGURED CHURCH IN DAVAO
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, RP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/196335a6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009